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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, December 26, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Three Valuable Fruits." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Winter in the North brings citrus fruits from sunny California, Florida and the warm Southwest -- this winter the biggest crop on record. So now, even if you must count your pennies closely, there may be oranges not just for the Christmas tree but for your breakfast fruit, lemons for lemon sauces or lemon pie, and grapefruit for the New Year's dinner fruit cup, fruit cocktail, or salad.

Not so long ago, lemons, oranges, and grapefruit were luxuries for the few. Now we consider them almost necessities for good winter diet in the North where most other kinds of fresh fruit are scarce. Once you could buy them only in the markets of big cities. Now they are sold almost everywhere in the United States.

What makes these juicy, near-tropical fruits so important? Answer: Their vitamin C, which is one of the necessities of human life. Many foods contain this vitamin, but many of them lose much of it when they are cooked. The citrus fruits score on two points -- they are the richest source of vitamin C we have, and we usually use them without cooking. The next richest source of vitamin C -- tomatoes -- are a cheaper source as a rule, and you can use them either fresh or canned in place of citrus fruits. But this is the time of year when we can perhaps afford to draw upon both sources, for citrus fruits are at their best and, for the most part, their cheapest.

Lemons were the first fruits appreciated for their vitamin C value, though nobody knew it was vitamin C. What they did know was that these fruits would prevent scurvy, a disease which was the curse of armies and navies, the sailors on merchant ships, and all people who were short of fresh vegetables and fruits. Now we know it is the vitamin C they contain which makes those foods so useful in preventing scurvy, and in preventing the more common symptoms which are a mild stage of this disease. Nutritionists tell us that lemons, oranges, and grapefruit are about equally good for this. And they add that one good-sized lemon, or a medium-sized orange, or half a small grapefruit are the least you need for a day's supply of vitamin C. Of course, more vitamin C is better, and you can get it from these or other fruits and vegetables, especially raw salads.

But to get the most of its Vitamin C from any food, you must use it fresh. For lemonade, or orange juice to drink, or for a fruit juice cocktail, squeeze your fruit just before you use it. Exposure to the air destroys the vitamin C, and

changes the flavor as well. You may have noticed how orange juice changes in taste if you let it stand, even in the refrigerator, overnight unless you cover it very tightly.

Lemons come to us chiefly from California, though you find Italian lemons on the markets in a few big eastern cities. California ships lemons every month of the year, but the heaviest shipments come in the spring and summer. Our chief orange-growing States are Florida and California. From now, in December, until late spring, the Eastern markets will be getting their biggest shipments of Florida oranges. California ships all the year round, California Valencias having the summer and early fall market to themselves. Shipments of California Navels begin early in November and reach their peak in April.

Grapefruit comes from Florida, Texas, California and Arizona. And, of the citrus fruits, grapefruit, alone, comes on the market canned as well as fresh. The canned grapefruit, and grapefruit juice, has practically the same vitamin value as the fresh.

The big demand for lemons comes in summer for lemonade. But fresh lemon juice for flavoring is a joy to the cook at any time. You can use lemon juice along with the grated peel, for flavoring many different dishes, and since you add the fresh juice after the other ingredients are cooked, you won't lose much vitamin value if the dish is served promptly. For that matter, what is better with fish -- canned salmon especially -- than fresh lemon juice? And what makes a nicer sauce for baked fish, or for greens or carrots than lemon butter sauce, with or without chopped parsley? As for salads, here again lemon juice is useful in French dressing made with lemon juice, or in lemon mayonnaise?

And who doesn't like lemon pie? You can make lemon pie without cooking the filling at all, if you blend one and 1/3 cups, or one 14-15 ounce can, of sweetened condensed milk with 1/2 cup of lemon juice and the grated rind along with the yolks of 2 eggs and 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar. Fill the already baked pie shell with this mixture and top it with meringue. I'll go over those ingredients again: 1 and 1/2 cups sweetened condensed milk; 1/2 cup lemon juice; grated rind of 1 lemon; 2 eggs; 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar. Mix but don't cook.

Oranges make one of the best of all flavorings, and you can use sections of fresh orange as well as juice in cake fillings or custards. The peel adds flavor, as well as vitamin C. Of course, the best way to get the full value of your orange is to drink the juice, or eat the orange sections "as is" or in fruit cups, salads or desserts, and use the peel for flavoring.

An old time orange dessert is ambrosia, "food for the gods," as it really seemed in the days when oranges were rare. It is still good today and fairly cheap. You make it by sprinkling shredded cocoanut over slices of orange and banana.

Half a grapefruit for breakfast, or to begin or end a lunch or dinner or supper is one good way to get most of your vitamin C for the day. Salt the fruit a little if you find it too sharp. For a fruit cup or a salad, combine grapefruit with any other fruit, or use it by itself. And save the shells. You can cut them in strips, jelly them in sirup and make one of the best of sweets.

